Structural Elements and Rhetorical Strategies

In learning to analyze and to create a written argument, it is helpful to know the devices that enable writers to aptly support their claims. Use this page as a resource to help in your analysis and writing of argument.

Structural Elements

- **Introduction**—the first section of the essay which opens the subject, sets the tone, and presents the thesis
- **Body**—the majority of the essay, occurring between the introduction and the conclusion, in which the writer develops the argument using the rhetorical strategies listed below; provides support for the thesis
- **Transition**—word or expression designed to emphasize connections between ideas and to move the content of the essay from one section to the next
- **Conclusion**—the final section of the essay, intended to bring closure and leave a lasting impression

Rhetorical Strategies:

**Elements of Argumentation**

- **Call to Action**—a request or petition by the writer to move the reader to take action on an issue
- **Claim**—a debatable or controversial statement the speaker or writer intends to prove with evidence
- **Concession**—a respectful acknowledgment of an opposing viewpoint. By recognizing and fairly summarizing an opposing viewpoint, the writer or speaker is seen as logical and fair-minded.
- **Counterargument**—follows a concession and strongly counters or refutes the opposition’s evidence

Terms of concession and counterargument:
- I concede that…; however,…
- Yes,…but…
- I recognize that…, but I must point out that…
- While I agree that…, I doubt that…
- While it is true that…, we must remember that…
- Although I understand that…, I still believe that…
- **Qualifier**—word or phrase that limits the claim, such as usually, sometimes, in many cases, etc.
- **Rebuttal**—showing the opposing argument to be weak or wrong
- **Unspoken Assumption**—the writer’s belief about the attitudes, values, or knowledge possessed by readers or the audience (What does the writer assume to be true about these things?)

**Methods of Exposition**

- **Analogy**—an extended comparison
- **Anecdote**—brief narrative or story
- **Cause-and-Effect**—identifying a result of an action
- **Comparison/Contrast**—placing differing points of an issue side-by-side
- **Definition**—an extended explanation of meaning
- **Example**—a detail supporting the claim
- **Fact or Statistic**—evidence that can be checked for accuracy
- **Literary technique**—devices such as connotative diction, imagery, figurative language, etc.
- **Reference to Authority**—quoting a well-regarded expert

**The Appeals**

- **Logos**—The writer or speaker uses devices such as (but not limited to) facts, statistics, cause/effect, or comparison/contrast to appeal to the audience’s (or reader’s) logic by constructing a well-reasoned argument.
- **Pathos**—The writer or speaker uses devices such as connotative diction, personal anecdotes, or imagery to evoke the audience’s (or reader’s) emotions by stirring strong feelings about the subject.
- **Ethos**—The writer or speaker uses devices such as using first person pronouns, citing authorities, or stating his qualifications or experience in order to establish himself as a credible or reliable person, one whose opinions can be trusted.